

Consumer Trends: Diners Become Nutritionally Aware

CHICAGO (PRNewswire) — As today's consumers seek healthier menu options, health has grown beyond a fad and into a lifestyle. People want to be more informed of the food they are eating and the way in which an operator or supplier is growing or preparing their food. Suppliers have an opportunity to provide fresh/natural foods and help operators tell the story.

More than half of consumers (59 percent) rated "socially responsible" as an important factor when deciding what restaurant they will visit, followed by; serves meat and poultry raised without hormones or steroids (58 percent), serves free-range poultry and/or grass-fed beef (45 percent) and serves natural and organic menu items (41 percent).

"Operators have a tremendous opportunity to gain share of stomach by taking credit for the socially responsible food they menu," says Darren Tristano, Executive Vice President of Technomic. "Although many brands are socially responsible, they're not communicating where these products are used or how they're sourced. Providing more information on where food was grown can help create the sense of healthy and sustainable."

The latest data from [MenuMonitor](#) [1], Technomic's online database of over 9,000 current U.S. and international menus (sourced down to the specific location where the menu is served), shows that menu terms such as "gluten-free," "local," and "natural" are rarely used.

Other interesting findings from [MenuMonitor](#) [1] include:

Natural:

- Over 9 percent of restaurants use "natural" when describing a menu item.
- "Natural" menu incidence posted yearly growth of 7 percent, with a 20 percent increase on kids' menus.
- A&W Restaurants uses 100 percent all-natural Wisconsin white cheddar for their cheese curds.
- A number of items featuring "all-natural chicken" are available at Corner Bakery.

Sustainable:

- The number of restaurants offering "sustainable" menu items has grown over 34 percent since 2011; sustainable menu items are up over 74 percent

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in that same period.

- McDonald's made a commitment to begin buying verified sustainable beef globally by 2016, and McDonald's fish products have been certified sustainable since 2005.
- Bruegger's Bagels French Roast coffee is "Sourced From Rainforest Alliance Certified Farms And Is Sustainably Grown To Benefit Farm Families, Wildfire, And The Environment."

Organic:

- Use of "organic" in menu descriptions, has grown 4 percent since 2011, with a 42 percent jump on kids' menus in that same period.
- Currently, nearly 18 percent of the top 500 U.S. restaurant chains offer an organic menu item.
- Diners can select from a number of organic ingredients at Jason's Deli, including organic wheat wraps, organic field greens, and organic blue corn chips.
- Chipotle offers branded organic tofu in a number of new vegetarian entrées.

Information presented here was also pulled from [Consumer Brand Metrics](#) [2], which looks at consumer attitudes towards and usage of 123 major restaurant chains.

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Links:

[1] https://www.technomic.com/Online_Services/MenuMonitor/

[2] https://www.technomic.com/Online_Services/Consumer_Brand_Metrics/US_Restaurants/